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SUCCESS STORY

Rural Roads Create Opportunities

Building roads in Arghandab employs young men and boosts the local farming economy



Photo: IRD/SPR-SEA

Local laborers in Arghandab, Kandahar, start construction on a rural road.

USAID's Strategic Provincial Roads – Southern and Eastern Afghanistan project takes a holistic approach to development, building roads in tandem with the development of local agricultural communities.

Arghandab, in war-torn southern Afghanistan, has a humble rural economy and fierce local pride. However, youth unemployment threatens local stability. Most young men are out of work and feel pressured to earn money any way they can, making them vulnerable to recruitment by illegal militia groups.

To improve the local economy and keep young men gainfully employed, village elders joined district shura leaders and District Governor Haji Mohammed to secure funding for local rural roads projects. This collaborative effort resulted in a tertiary roads sub-grant from USAID's Strategic Provincial Roads – Southern and Eastern Afghanistan (SPR-SEA) project to build three roads with a total length of 5.3 km.

USAID and Afghan's Organization of Humane Welfare non-governmental organization worked with village elders to identify the best road routes, plan the road works, and recruit and train laborers and local construction workers.

"I went from no job to having a job, and after this road is finished, I know I will have more work ahead because I am trained to do the work to build roads," said laborer Noorull Haq.

On September 30, 2010, village elders held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the construction start on all three roads. "These new roads will improve our local economy," said Arghandab District Governor Haji Mohammed. "We will have better access to trade, markets, schools and hospitals; and we are also giving our young men jobs close to home and new skills so they can get future work."

The new road will also improve local trade and commerce. "Until now people wanting to buy our fresh fruits and vegetables from our farmers avoided our villages because our roads were too poor and it was too difficult for them to reach us, it takes too much time," said laborer Raz Mahamad. "Now that the road will be fixed, we will get more business."

These roads will be completed in February 2011, providing more than 500 military-age local men with an income and valuable on-the-job training.